National Military Family Association (NMFA)

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www.nmfa.org

EUCOM Deployment & Community Counseling Support Conference June 2007

Working in support of Military Families

- We are volunteer-led and volunteer-focused
- Funded through memberships, military spouse clubs, individual and corporate donors, Combined Federal Campaign (#11365)
- Provide legislative and policy initiative information through newsletter (*The Voice*), NMFA website (*www.militaryfamily.org*), fact sheets, *Government and You E-news*, monthly spouse club e-mail
- Invited to submit testimony for 6 hearings in 2007—download testimony at: *www.nmfa.org/testimonies*
- Testified before the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission, the Task Force on the Future of Military Medicine, several of the review boards for Walter Reed

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★ What's New ★

FAMILY TOPICS

Deployment & You
Education
Family Life
Family Member Benefits
Government & You
Health Care
Money & You

RESOURCES

Links
Press
Publications
Surveys
Your Community

About NMFA
NMFA Membership
Volunteers & Representatives

The Voice for Military Families

FREE Summer Camp for Military Kids

Operation Purple camps offer a free week of summer fun for military kids with parents who have been, are currently, or will be deployed. This year more than 40 weeks of camps will be held at 34 locations in 26 states. Campers from all service branches will gather together to experience a memorable week of fun and adventure with a focus on learning coping skills to better deal with a parent's deployment. Registration begins **March 15th and ends May 1st.** The NMFA online application, state specific forms, and details about each camp location are available on our site. Find out where the 2007 camps will be hosted and register today. <<more>>

★ HASC Seeks to Improve Support to Wounded and Families

On March 20, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) approved by a vote of 59-0 H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. The bill moved quickly from introduction by Representative Ike Skelton (D-MO, 4th) on March 15 to Full Committee approval and placement on the House calendar. The bipartisan legislation was designed to address issues recently

★ Protecting the Benefits of Surviving Children

Recently, in reaction to a story in the Washington Post, there has been concern about the awarding of survivor benefits to the children of single service members. It is important to understand that there is a package of survivor benefits. The payment of the death gratuity is meant to act as a financial bridge, to help with living expenses until other benefits such as the Dependency and Indemnity

The Application Period for the 2007 NMFA Spouse Scholarship is Closed!

Register here for e-mails on future spouse scholarship or education opportunities!

Military Spouse Education Resource Guide Available Now!

Site Sponsored By

VA Mortgage Center: The VA Loan Specialists

★ NMFA Programs ★

★ NMFA Family Award

Nominate a military family who exemplifies the best of the military family lifestyle ▸

★ NMFA Government and You E-News

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Military Family Issues in the News

- Family Readiness and Deployment Support
- Pay
- Housing
- Health Care
- Survivor Issues
- Injured Service members
- Mental Health issues
- Information Resources

Military Family Issues in the News

- ☑ Family Readiness and Deployment Support

Deployment Support: What re the Issues?

- Servicemember preparation
- Family preparation Family Readiness
  - Making sure installation services are available: child care, counseling, MWR, activities for teens and older children, financial literacy

- Changing or compressed deployment cycles
- How to support volunteers?
- How to involve the geographically isolated and non-ID card holders?
  - Expanding use of Military OneSource

- What do the children need?
- How can the community help?

Challenges to Family Readiness

- Multiple, repeated and long deployments
- Extensions
- Burnout-family volunteers, caregivers
- Individual Augmentees (IA)
- Funding that is tied to current operations
- Child care
- Impact of deployments on children and teens
- Mental Health Challenges (PTSD -TBI)
- Emotional Cycle of Deployment
- Return and Reunion Reintegration

Military Family Issues in the News

- ☑ Family Readiness and Deployment Support
- ☑ **Pay**

Military Pay and Compensation

- Big Concern: Sustaining pay commensurate with what is asked of service members
- Issues for DoD, Congress, and military families:
  - Pay raises (targeted, longevity, etc.) vs. bonuses: what's the right mix?
  - What other pays are needed to help transform force?
  - Guard and Reserve pay and compensation: what is equitable?

Military Family Issues in the News

- ☑ Family Readiness and Deployment Support
- ☑ Pay
- ☑ **Housing**

Housing

- Big Concern: How do we make sure families have access to quality housing in appropriate neighborhoods
- Issues for Congress, DoD, and military families:
  - Implementing housing privatization (PPV): commander accountability, utility payments, customer service and maintenance, what happens when more housing added?
  - Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH): what's the standard used, end of geographic rate protection, accuracy of surveys and rate setting, how far away from the installation will families have to go to find housing?
  - Privatization is good news story!

Military Family Issues in the News

- ☑ Family Readiness and Deployment Support
- ☑ Pay
- ☑ Housing
- ☑ **Health Care**

Health Care

- Big Concern: How to maintain access to quality health care for all military beneficiaries without raising their health care costs.
- Issues for Congress, DoD and military families:
  - Nationwide health care cost increases affecting DoD as well
  - How to ensure health care quality for military beneficiaries in both military hospitals and TRICARE network
  - Should TRICARE cost shares, co-pays, deductibles, premiums be increased? For whom?
  - More beneficiaries coming back to TRICARE: “ghosts”
  - How to ensure medical readiness for Guard and Reserve members and continuity of care for their families?
  - Beneficiary and provider education about the benefit

Health Care

- Issues, continued:
  - What are the proper reimbursement rates?
  - TRICARE Standard: how to ensure more providers will see TRICARE beneficiaries, beneficiary education needed
  - What's the "hassle factor?"
  - Access standards: are military facilities adhering to them?
  - Uniform formulary: more changes coming in your pharmacy benefit
  - Is there enough mental health care available for service members and families?
  - What will be the effects of BRAC, Global Rebasing, and deployment on military families access to care?
  - How do we protect the benefit we have?

Military Family Issues in the News

- ☑ Family Readiness and Deployment Support
- ☑ Pay
- ☑ Housing
- ☑ Health Care
- ☑ **Survivor Issues**

Survivor Benefits

- Big Concern: Following Mr. Lincoln's charge to care for the widow and the orphan.
- Issues for Congress, DoD and Families:
  - Understanding the mix of benefits: lump sum payments (Death Gratuity, SGLI); burial benefits; housing; health and dental care; monthly payments (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Survivor Benefit Plan, Social Security); state survivor benefits
  - Casualty assistance
  - Availability of counseling and other support
  - End the DIC offset of SBP!

What Did Congress Do?

- Increased Death Gratuity to $100,000 for survivors of ***all*** active duty deaths
- Required enhanced regulations to promote consistency of Service casualty assistance programs—training, continuity of assistance, oversight, information
- Continued status of surviving children as active duty family members
- Made permanent provision allowing surviving families to live in government housing one year or to receive one year's worth of BAH

Military Family Issues in the News

- ☑ Family Readiness and Deployment Support
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- ☑ Health Care
- ☑ Survivor Issues
- **☑ Injured Service members**

Wounded Servicemembers Have Wounded Families

<u>What are the Issues?</u>

- Family support while service member is hospitalized
- To stay in the military or not to stay?
- Transition from DoD to VA health care
- Short-term and long-term financial stability
- Community support
- Parents and siblings

Wounded Warrior Initiative

- Improves medical and dental care for members of the Armed Forces assigned to hospitals in an outpatient status;
- Establishes a Department of Defense-wide Ombudsman Office to provide policy guidance to the ombudsman offices in the military departments regarding the information and assistance provided to recovering service members and their families;
- Provides independent medical advocates for members before the medical evaluation board;
- Establishes training and workload requirements for physical evaluation board liaison officers;
- Requires a standardized training program and curriculum for persons involved with the Department of Defense disability evaluation system;
- Improves the training for health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates for particular conditions of recovering service members;
- Establishes an oversight board to oversee medical care, quality of life, administrative processing and family programs supporting wounded warriors;
- Requires the development of plans and research for reducing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
- Requires a joint evaluation by the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs on their disability evaluation systems; and
- Prohibits A-76 competitions at military medical facilities.

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- ☑ Survivor Issues
- ☑ Injured Service members
- ☑ **Mental Health issues**

Mental Health – Barriers to Care

- Provider access
  - More in theater
  - Shortage of child and adolescent providers
  - Volunteer vs. TRICARE
- Lack of coordination
- Stigma against care declining but …
- Time and distance
- Burnout
- Shortage of bereavement/grief counseling

Mental Health – Progress Made

- Return and Reunion Programs
  - Battlemind
- DoD/VA Collaboration
- Programs in Theater
  - Combat Stress Teams
- Community Support
  - Combat Operation Stress Team in Germany
  - Military OneSource
  - Military and Family Life Consultants
- Resources for Children
  - Talk, Listen, Connect and Elmo
  - MilitaryStudent.org
- **Increased Interest by Congress!!!**
- **Mental Health Task Force**
- **APA Report:** ***http://www.apa.org/releases/MilitaryDeploymentTaskForceReport.pdf***

Mental Health – What still needs to be done?

- Recruitment of additional providers for both theater and home station
- More resources targeted at schools
- Providing resources consistently throughout the deployment cycle
- Better coordination for full support to improve outreach, continuity of care and access to care
- Improvements to counseling for survivors and family members of the wounded

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- ☑ **What else is NMFA following?**

NMFA has told Congress this year:

- Challenges
  - Shortages in base operations funding
  - Need for innovative child care
    - Longer hours
    - Loss of in-home providers
  - Effect of multiple and extended deployments on youth
  - Education – are receiving bases ready for our children
  - Financial Readiness – pay day loans – Military Lending Act carve outs
  - Spouse Education and Employment
    - Unemployment insurance
    - Closer look at contract positions
    - Need for professional weight allowance for spouses
  - Access to health care
  - Support for families with special needs
  - Allow medically retired access to AD TRICARE benefit for 3 years

NMFA has told Congress this year:

- Family Readiness impacts Military Readiness
  - Families serve too
  - Families need change with each deployment
  - Concern with burnout of volunteers and paid staff
  - Sustained support – not just surge support
  - Remember the individual augmentees and their families

Current Issues

- Increase the use of Military One Source:
- How will transformation affect military families and communities?
- Continued quality of life support during Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and overseas rebasing
- How should State and Federal governments work together to support military families?
- Financial readiness for service members and families

Working in Support of Military Families

- Recently updated! Spouse Education Resource Guide available for sale on the NMFA website
- Government and You E-News
- Partner with In-Charge Institute to produce *Military Money* magazine
- NMFA Volunteer Representatives serve as “eyes and ears” in military communities and share vital information
- *Operation Purple* Camps: 42 weeks of camp at 34 locations in 26 states, serving 3,500 children this year – first ever camp for children of the wounded

Special Programs

- **Spouse Scholarships**
  - Approximately 4,000 applicants in 2007 – 60 scholarships awarded
  - Awards undergraduate, certificate, masters and doctoral
  - Closed for 2007 – look for it in the beginning of 2008
- **NMFA Family Award**
  - Recognizes outstanding military families
  - One family recognized each month, one annual winner
  - Applications available today!
- **Very Important Patriot Award**
  - Recognizes outstanding volunteers in the military community
  - Nominations close May 30th 2007
- Information on NMFA website: *www.nmfa.org*

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- ☑ Injured Service members
- ☑ Mental Health issues
- ☑ What Else is NMFA following?
- ☑ **Information Resources**

Information Resources

- DoD Information: *www.defenselink.mil*
- Military One Source: *www.militaryonesource.com* (user name: military; password: one source);
- Phone: CONUS:1-800-342-9647; *OCONUS: 800-3429-6477 from Universal Free Phone or OCONUS collect: 485-530-5980-instructions for dialing found on Contact us site of Military One Source homepage
- In-State Tuition Initiative: *https://www.armyeducation.army.mil/InState/index.HTM*
- BRAC: *www.defenselink.mil/brac*
- TRICARE: *http://tricare.osd.mil/*
- Child Care Referral Assistance: *http://www.naccrra.org/*

Information Resources

- DEERS: *http://www.tricare.osd.mil/deers/*
- Defense Commissary Agency: *www.commissaries.com*
- Military spouse employment: *www.milspouse.org*
- DoD/Monster.com spouse employment initiative: *www.military.com/spouse*
- DoD Schools/DDESS Transfer Study: *www.dodea.edu*
- Guard Family Support information: *www.guardfamily.org*
- SGLI, TSGLI, VA survivor benefits: *www.va.gov*

Information Resources

- Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH): *https://secureapp2.hqda.pentagon.mil/perdiem/bah.html*
- Housing Privatization: *http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/*
- DoD Educational Opportunities Directorate: *www.militarystudent.org*
- State Initiatives to support military families: *usa4militaryfamilies.org*
- Legislative Information: *http://thomas.loc.gov*
- *DON'T FORGET NMFA! www.militaryfamily.org*

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